“Splatoon 3” *Side Order* interview. We ask about Acht’s bandages, the price of Pearl’s new outfit, the residents of the Order Sector, and more!

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Translation notes will be in brackets [[like so.]]

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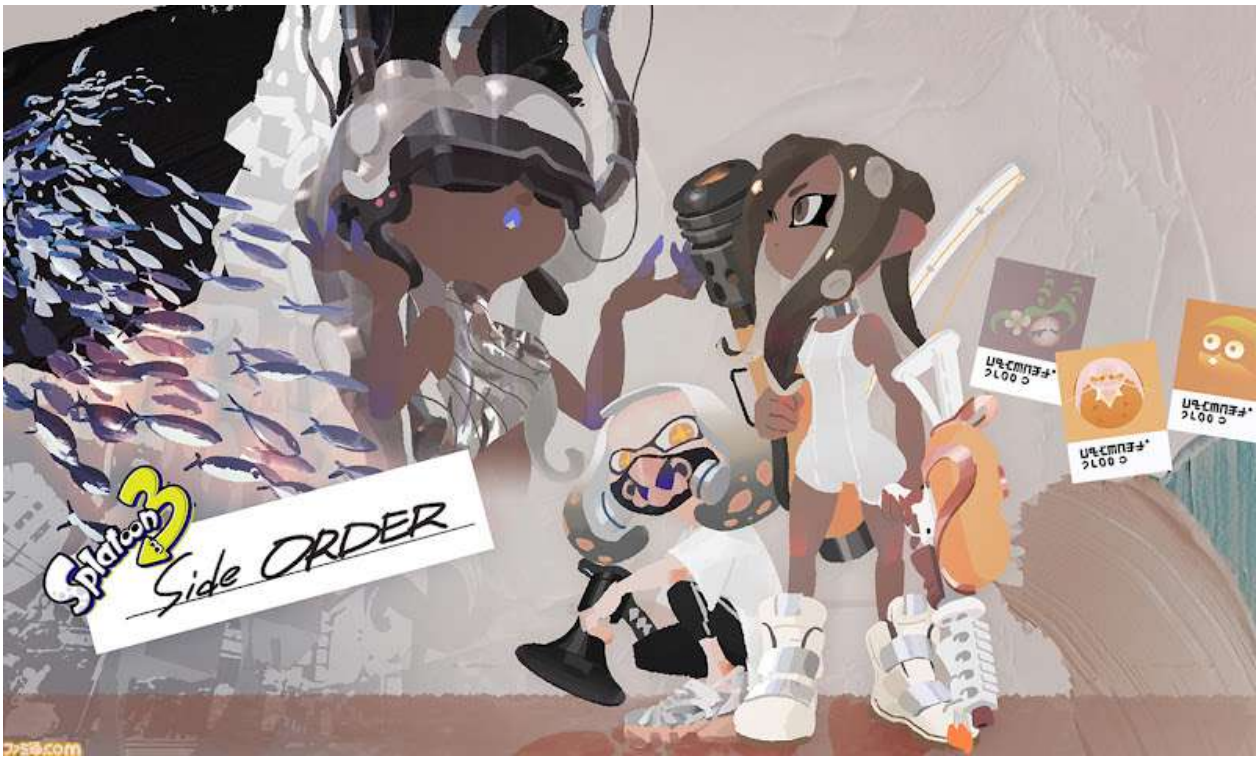
Interviewees:
Kenji Matsumoto - *Side Order* Director
Seita Inoue - *Splatoon 3* Director and Art director
Toshiyuki Sudo - *Splatoon 3* Sound Director



Part 1: Adventures in the Order Sector that expand Splatoon’s possibilities.

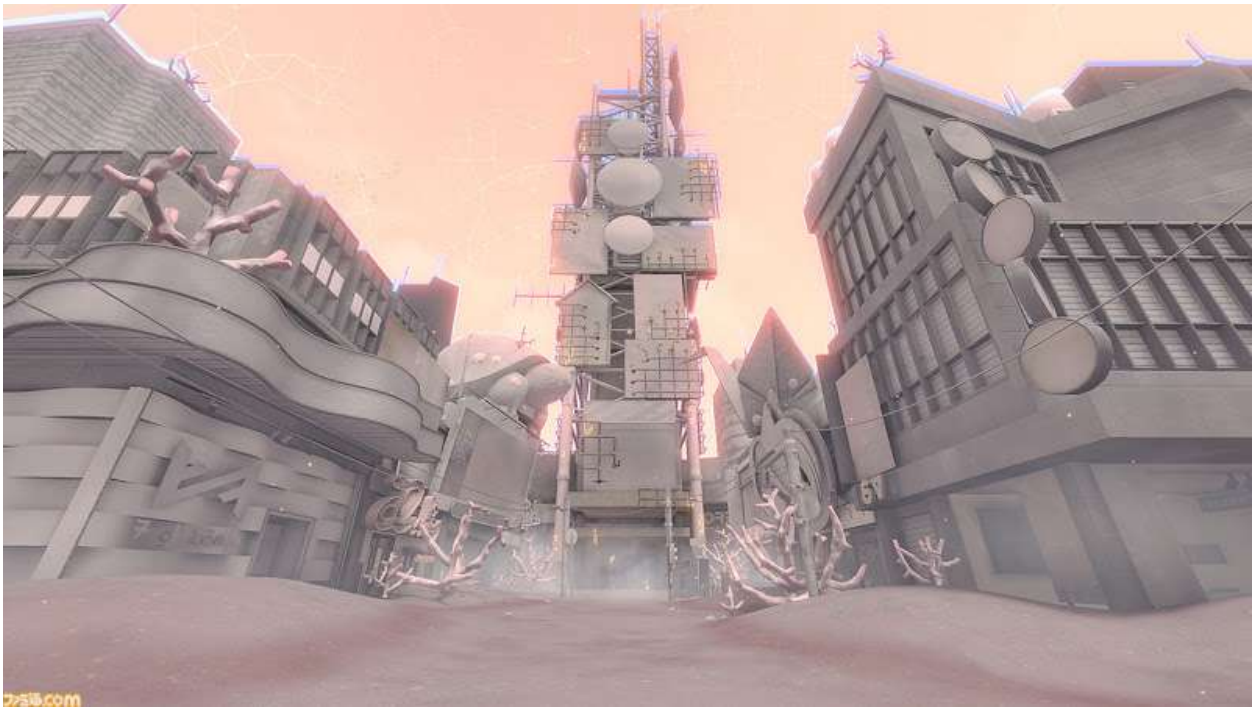
— Congratulations on the release of *Side Order*. Wasn't the development schedule very busy with

the Spring 2024 Fresh Season?

Matsumoto: Yes, it was. Even though it was very hectic, we had a lot of fun developing the game.

— *Side Order* is set in a colorless Inkopolis Square. Was this something that was decided on at the very start?

Inoue: *Side Order*'s development began after the release of Splatoon 3. All we had decided from the start is that we wanted to create a DLC with an “Order” theme, which is the side that didn’t win Splatoon 2’s final Splatfest.



— Was the "climb up the Tower of Order" objective of the game decided on after the production of the DLC started?

Matsumoto: Yes. It was something we thought about while planning the general framework for the *Side Order* project. We decided to formalize it early on though, as the structure of repeated challenges and the setting of the tower were a good match.

The *Octo Expansion* DLC for S2 was set in the deep sea and involved a deep dive, so I think the structure of going up to the top floor this time is a perfect counterpart that fits quite nicely.

— Please share your reasons for depicting order in a virtual world.

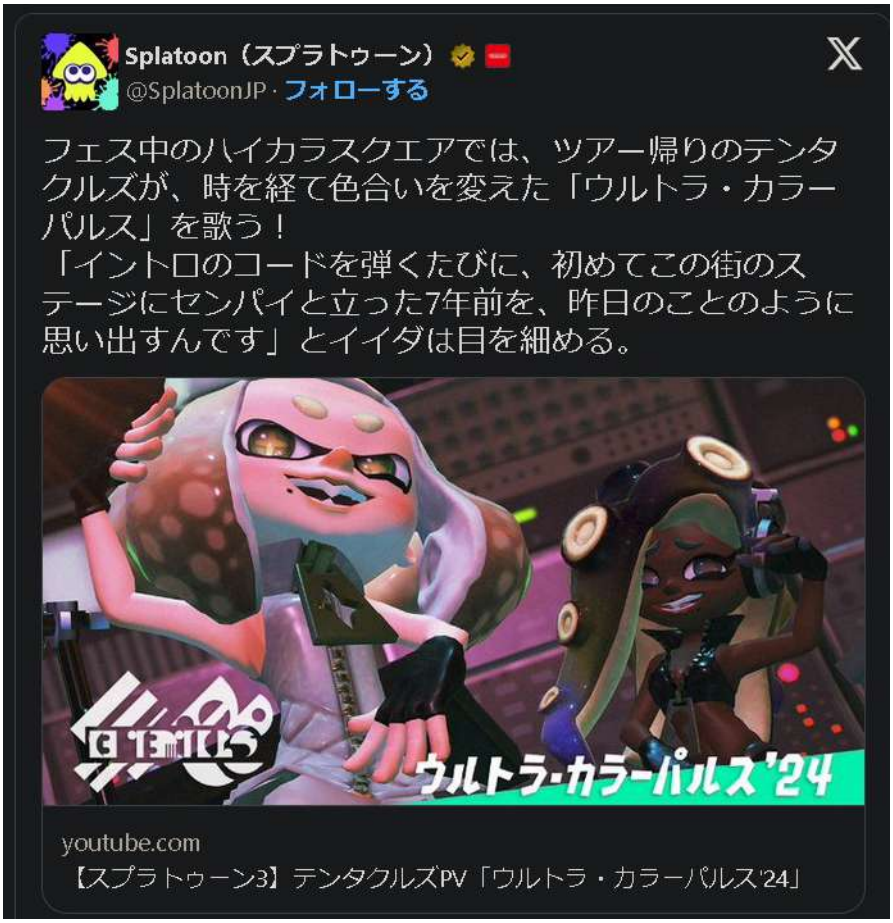
Inoue: The structure of the game is very different from the main game and story mode, so we made the world manageable for that. However, since we’re making a virtual world set inside a video game, if you make that sense of virtual-ness easy to understand, then you’ll tend to end up with a virtual world that gives off a sense of deja vu. For that reason, an “organic, and somewhat warm” expression of order is what we aimed for.

—By the way, you can set Inkopolis Square as your hub world after clearing *Side Order*. Was having “3” towns for Splatoon “3” the plan all along?

Inoue: When we were planning the downloadable content, in addition to the "order-themed single-player mode" we also wanted to introduce Inkopolis Plaza and Square to players who started out with Splatoon 3. So we thought about adding “towns” to the list of connections to the number “3”.

—Will Off the Hook be at the Inkopolis Square for the upcoming Splatfest?

Sudo: Yes, they will. The first half of the Splatfest will be "Color Pulse (2024)" a funky and stylish remake of a song that's been in heavy rotation on their world tour. In the second half, they will sing "We're so Back," a dramatic new song that is both cute and powerful. Don't miss either one!



[[Splatoon JP tweet link: https://twitter.com/SplatoonJP/status/1769651204572025201.
Unofficial SplatoonENG translation: https://twitter.com/SplatoonEng/status/1769767211487330404]]

—*Side Order* seems to be more focused on repeated play than the previous single-player modes. What is the reason for this?

Matsumoto: So far, with the story mode in S2, with *Octo Expansion*, and with the story mode in S3, we've made three game modes that just focus on progressing through stages.

In particular, the story mode in S3 was the culmination of all of our previous single-player games, so we thought *Side Order* would be a good time to propose a new way to play Splatoon. By creating a game mode that can be played over and over again, we aimed to provide a quick challenge when one has spare time or no internet connection, so that players can enjoy a different experience each time.

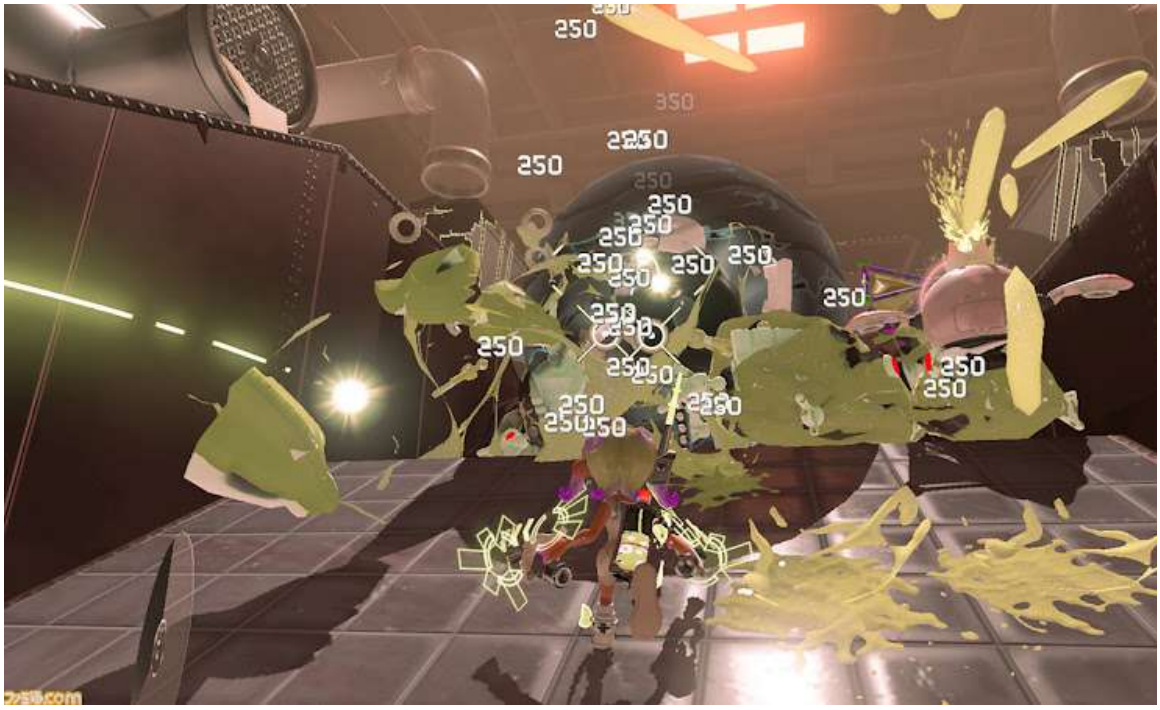
—There is a certain amount of randomness in the strengths one gets from the Color chips, so was it difficult to balance the difficulty and the strength of the weapons?

Matsumoto: There's a large variation in performance on the player's side when comparing the state of taking a wide variety of chips, versus the state of specializing in particular types of chips. In terms of difficulty, our method is based on that state of taking a wide variety of chips, and we put together stages with elements that are easy to clear when those abilities are present.

— So the difficulty level was set by using the state of taking a wide variety of chips as an average. I was also surprised that for the first time in the series, numerical values for damage are displayed.

Matsumoto: As play progresses and the player gets stronger, it became necessary to display those numerical values to make it easier to experience the increase in damage, and to compare the various means of attack.

The digital font is simply more legible and is a representation that fits the game world. However, we had a special font prepared to keep this virtual world from being too generic.



—The kinds of enhancements vary from chip to chip. Are there any criteria that led to what enhancements were chosen?

Matsumoto: First, we categorized the player's actions, such as attacking, moving, and inking, and defined a number of conditions that we thought would be ideal. To put it simply, we imagined a situation in which the player could defeat an enemy simply by making a squid roll.

Then, we selected the effects that would bring us closer to what we thought as ideal, and the results are the basis for the consolidation and elimination of these effects. In the process, new combinations were created, and many discoveries were made during the creation process.

—For those who are just starting to play, what are some recommended weapons and chips?

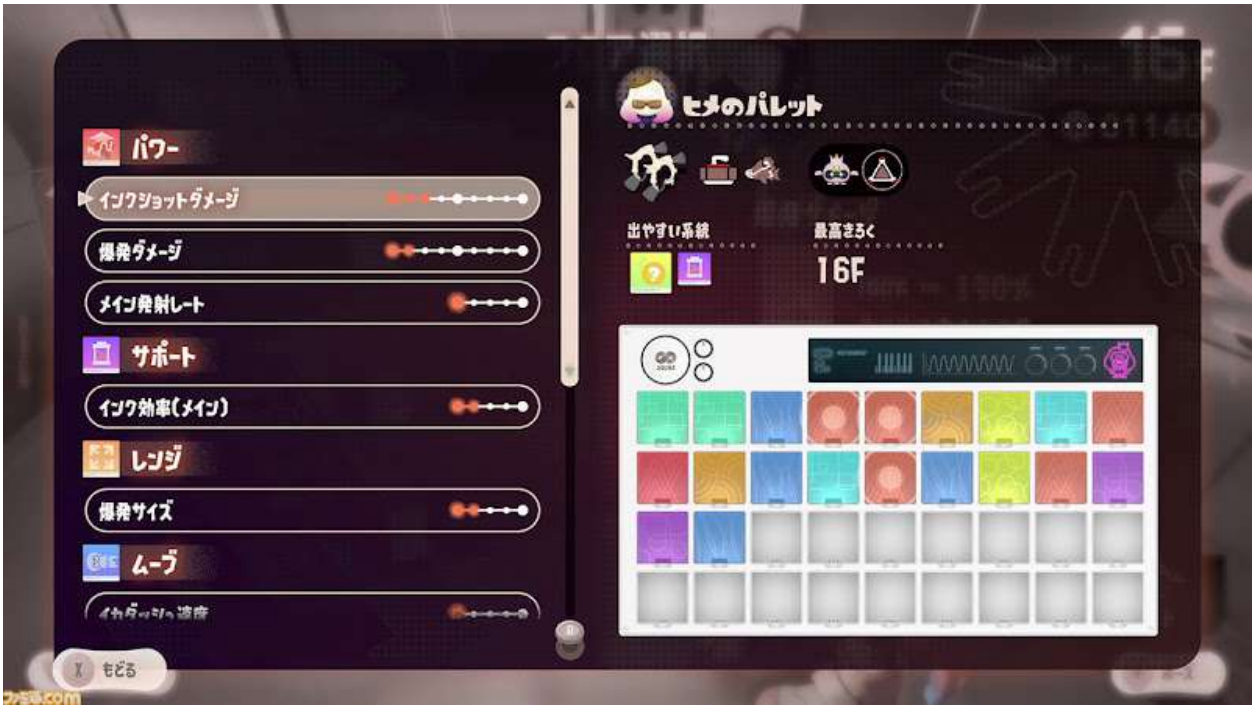
Matsumoto: I recommend all of them, but I also recommend that you be conscious of collecting chips of the same category, and of the same tone, as it's easier to play to your strengths that way. Personally, I like to collect Luck chips of the same tone to fill up the screen with items.

—Any tricks for collecting chips?

Matsumoto: Each palette has its own set of Color chips that are more likely to appear, so if in doubt, I think it is a good idea to choose those common tones. The favored tone rate can be increased with Marina's hacks.

—By the way, each palette has a set of a character and weapon, are these the weapons that those characters actually have?

Matsumoto: The Memverse system takes the liberty of setting up each palette either based on the weapon that each character has, the weapon that each character would have if they did, and the weapon that would suit them.



—Many players took up challenge runs immediately after launch, and some cleared the game quite quickly. Time attacks are also quite popular.

Matsumoto: Frankly speaking, we were surprised by the number of players who were progressing faster than we had expected. Not only that, but I'm very happy to see players enjoying themselves in their own way.

Since the release of *Side Order*, we've seen an increase in the number of people battling it out and playing Salmon Run, so I think that people are enjoying the Splatoon game as a whole. I hope that we can continue to expand the possibilities of Splatoon by continuing these kinds of initiatives.

Part 2: Pearl's new outfit costs 200 million G! Unexpected design backstory is revealed along with concept art!

— What went into designing the elements that appear in *Side Order*?

Inoue: While the staff who had been working on the main game determined the core mechanics of the project, younger staff who had played Splatoon 1 and Splatoon 2 as students took the lead in the development of the project. Their enthusiasm was very high, and they packed in a variety of things that brought color to the colorless world of order. The three of us would like to answer the questions you have asked, representing what each of our staff members has thought about.

— Please tell us about the concept behind the new costumes for Pearl and Marina. I can tell that their designs had a space motif with Pearls's space suit-like jacket and the galaxy pattern on the tips of Marina's tentacles.

Inoue: Pearl’s clothes are created with spacesuit material and with the intensity of someone who's become a world-class artist. It is an exclusive piece of haute couture and cost 200 million G.

— 200 million G… a world-class artist indeed. What about Marina?

Inoue: I thought that Marina would look good in a brightly colored suit, and I tried to give her an engineer-like vibe while keeping a crisp look. The tips of Marina’s hair seem to have been inspired by Pearl's enthusiasm to create a cosmic-themed outfit.

— Please also tell us why Acht has a bandage on their left hand.

Inoue: They got pulled into the virtual world a little before Agent 8 and tried their best to conquer the tower, but they got injured because they weren't able to be as agile as they thought they were. I think they might regret slacking off in training school a bit.

A picture of the training school. Acht is slacking off in the upper left.

— By the way, is Dedf1sh Acht's stage name while they perform as a DJ?

Inoue: Yes, it is. I think they came up with it by themselves. They probably think of it as a sort of username.

— What was the inspiration for the Palettes? The feature of playing a sound when the chips are touched has been talked about on social media, but please tell us how the design came about, including the sound trick.

Inoue: It’s based on a painter’s palette and a MIDI pad. The MIDI pad is a device used for live performances and music production. The color chips are designed after the color swatches used for color coordination, and are made to look like a device that can be plugged into something. I think it looks good, I'd like to own a real one (laughs).

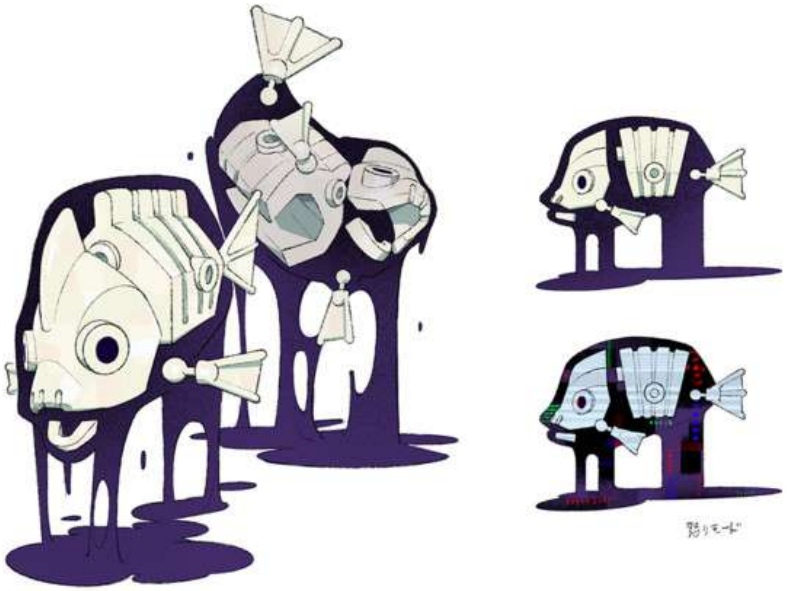
Sudo: At first, there were no plans to make the gimmick where the color chips made sounds when touched, but one day during development, I was surprised to find that a programmer had created it. Most of the sounds are fragments of Off the Hook songs. I added not only melodies but also percussion and other

sounds to give variation to the sound and make it fun to collect. Also, if you try tapping the palette in the Overlorder boss fight, you might hear something cool…

— Is there a reason why you chose to make the enemies fish? Also, please tell us why you chose a bone-like design.

Inoue: Since the game takes place in a white world, bones were a natural motif for the design. The concept of the game was to defeat a large number of enemies who move in simple ways, so shoals of fish made of bones were chosen for the design since it is difficult to gauge their intentions.

At first, the bones were quite realistic-looking, but the person in charge of the project made a suggestion, and we ended up with a design that gives off a lovable yet eerie impression.



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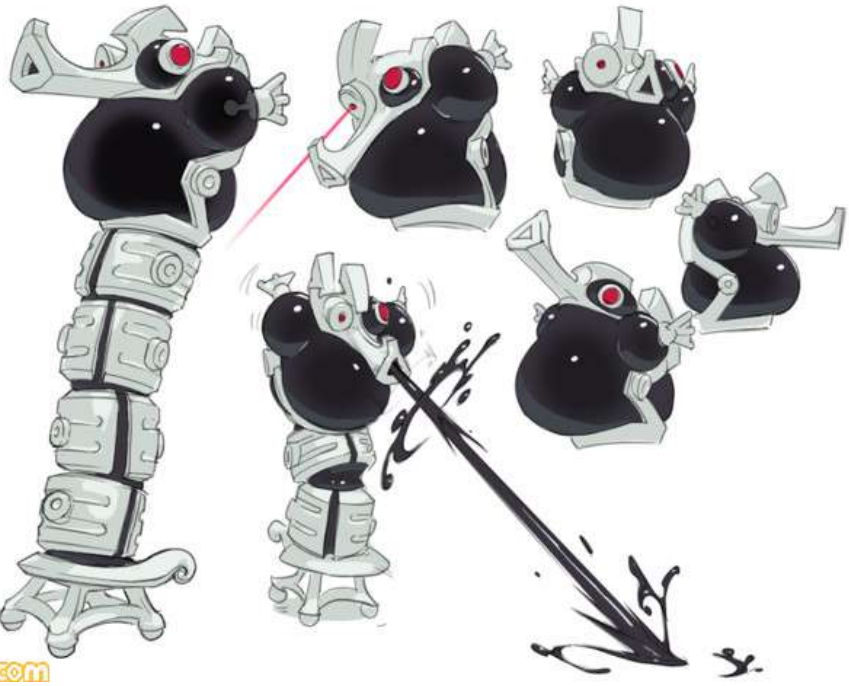

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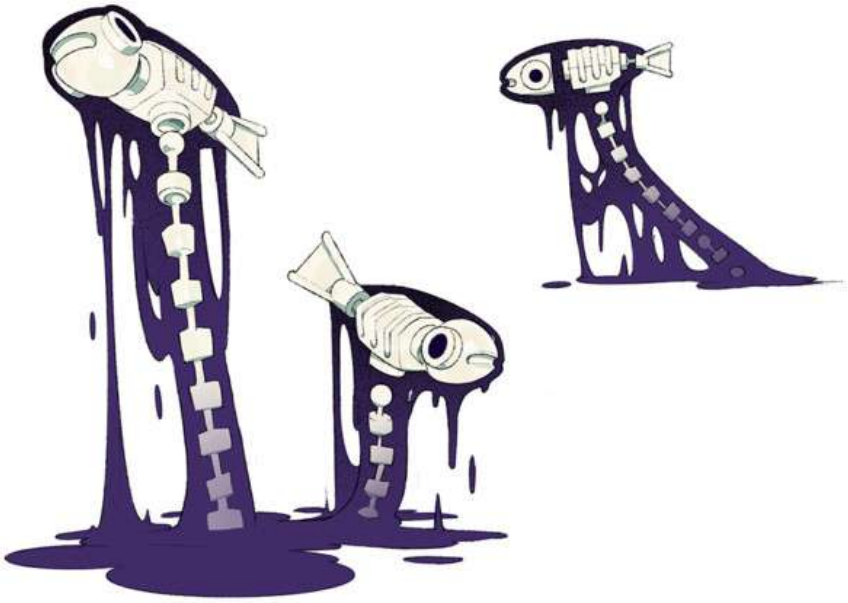

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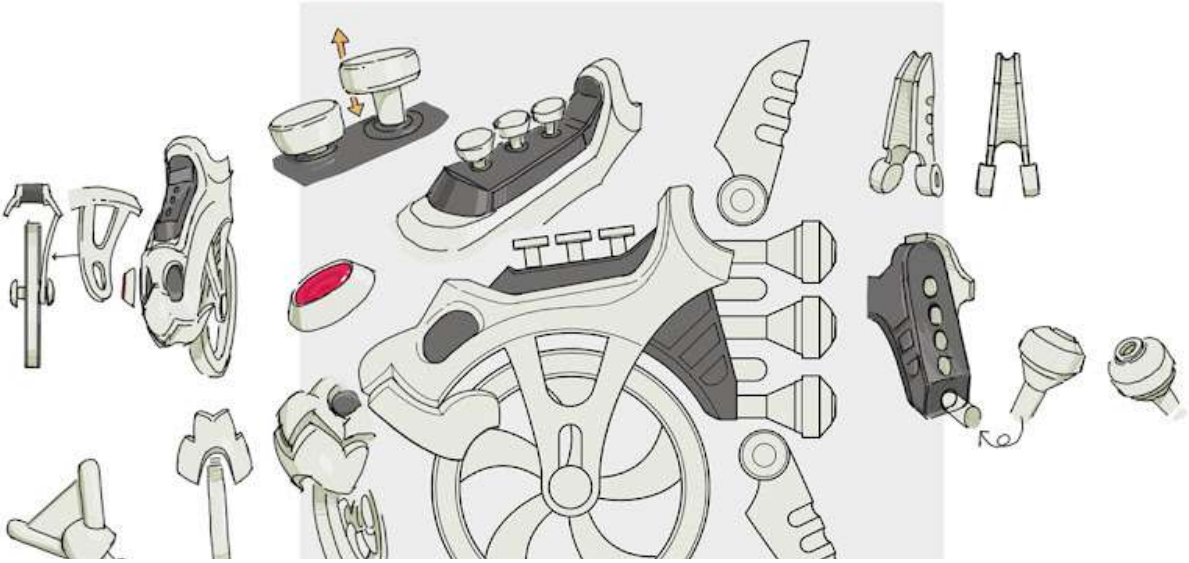


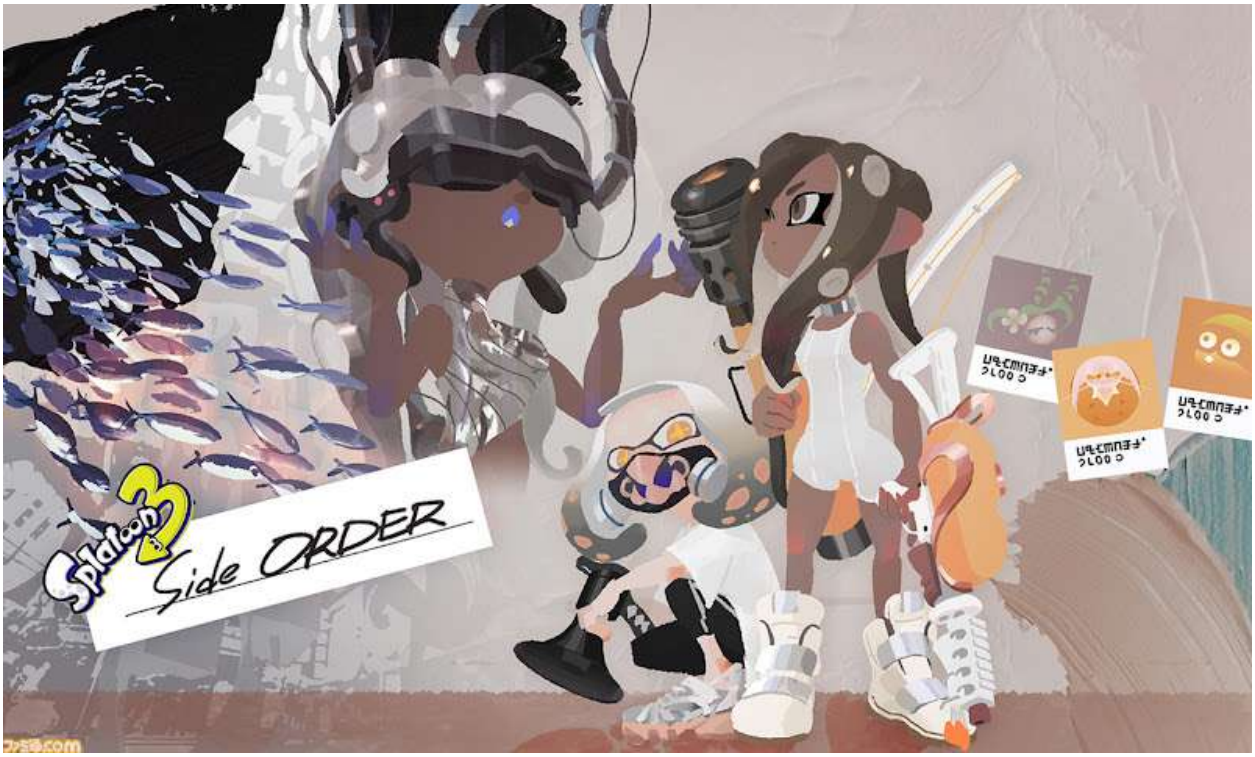
Enemy design concept art. They seem to be composed of detachable parts, reminiscent of Shokugan and other plastic figures.

— Please tell us why the enemies are named after musical terms.

Inoue: Since Marina is involved in music production and created the world, we decided to use a musical term motif to name the enemies. Before the names were added, we called them "jumpy splashing enemies," "bomb-pew-pew enemies," etc. The final names are much cooler.

— What were the visions for the bosses and the concepts behind their design? For example, is Marina Agitando being controlled by order?

Inoue: When I first started drawing concept art, I already decided that Agent 8 and Pearl would go to rescue Marina, who had been corrupted by the virtual world she created.

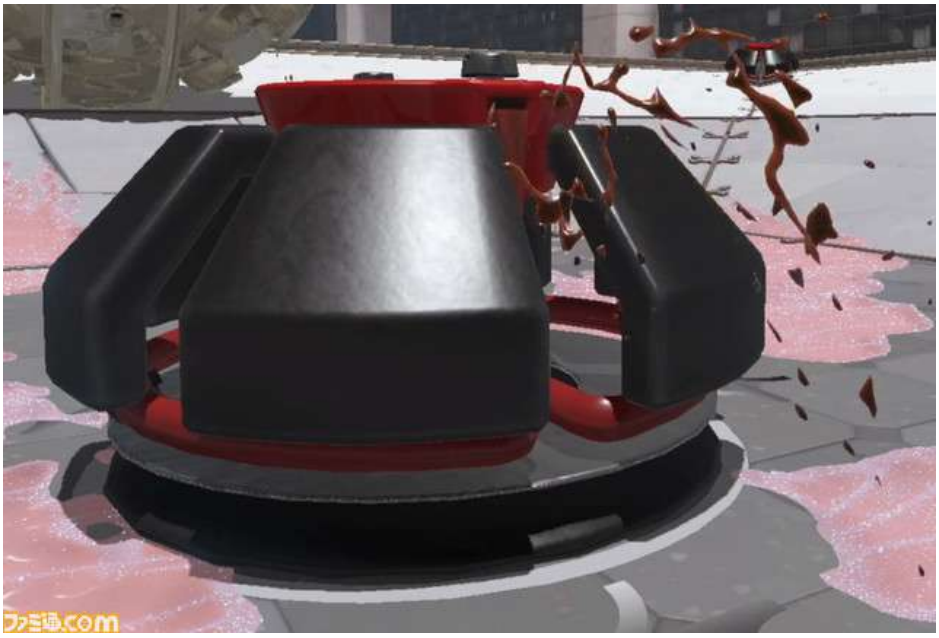


While using this sketch as a starting point, we asked the artist to create a design where her legs were covered by Order as we solidified the gameplay aspects of the design. Due to the influence of the forces of order, a design resembling Marina's final Splatfest outfit was chosen.

— What about the Pinging Marciale? What was the inspiration for a boss who gradually breaks down and becomes smaller?

Inoue: The motif of the boss is a sea urchin. The bumper on the stage is a soy sauce pitcher, and when

you hit it, soy sauce comes out. The first form, before the shell is broken, has pudding-like protrusions, and when it collides with the soy sauce on the bumper, it becomes sea urchin-flavored.



[[TN: This is the specific kind of pudding being referred to, a Japanese custard pudding]]

— A combination of pudding with soy sauce…..! Or rather, black liquid that must've been soy sauce.

Inoue: By the way, the protrusions on the shell in its second form are rice bins, with sushi rice inside. The result is an interesting combination of form, function, and seafood material.

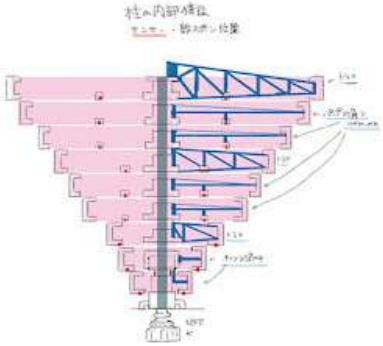
Matsumoto: The boss hardly ever moves on its own, but the smaller it is, the easier it rolls, making it more difficult to aim and roll towards the bumpers.

— Was the Asynchronous Rondo inspired by a sushi conveyor belt? During the battle, you can hear a singing voice that sounds like a wail. Could you tell us what that is…?

Inoue: Originally, it was a hospitality robot created by Marina; however, after it was taken over by Order, it became disastrously aggressive. The design was inspired by a sushi conveyor belt and a merry-go-round, and the stage was inspired by the Panopticon (a circular prison) and a circus tent.

Sudo: It does sing a song*, but since the world of order is built by everyone's thoughts, perhaps it is singing a song that is deeply etched in someone's memory.

[[TN: *There might be a pun that I wasn't sure how to translate. Asynchronous Rondo is called Kaisen Rondo, here Sudo says the Kaisen-loid is what's singing…like voca"loid"?]]

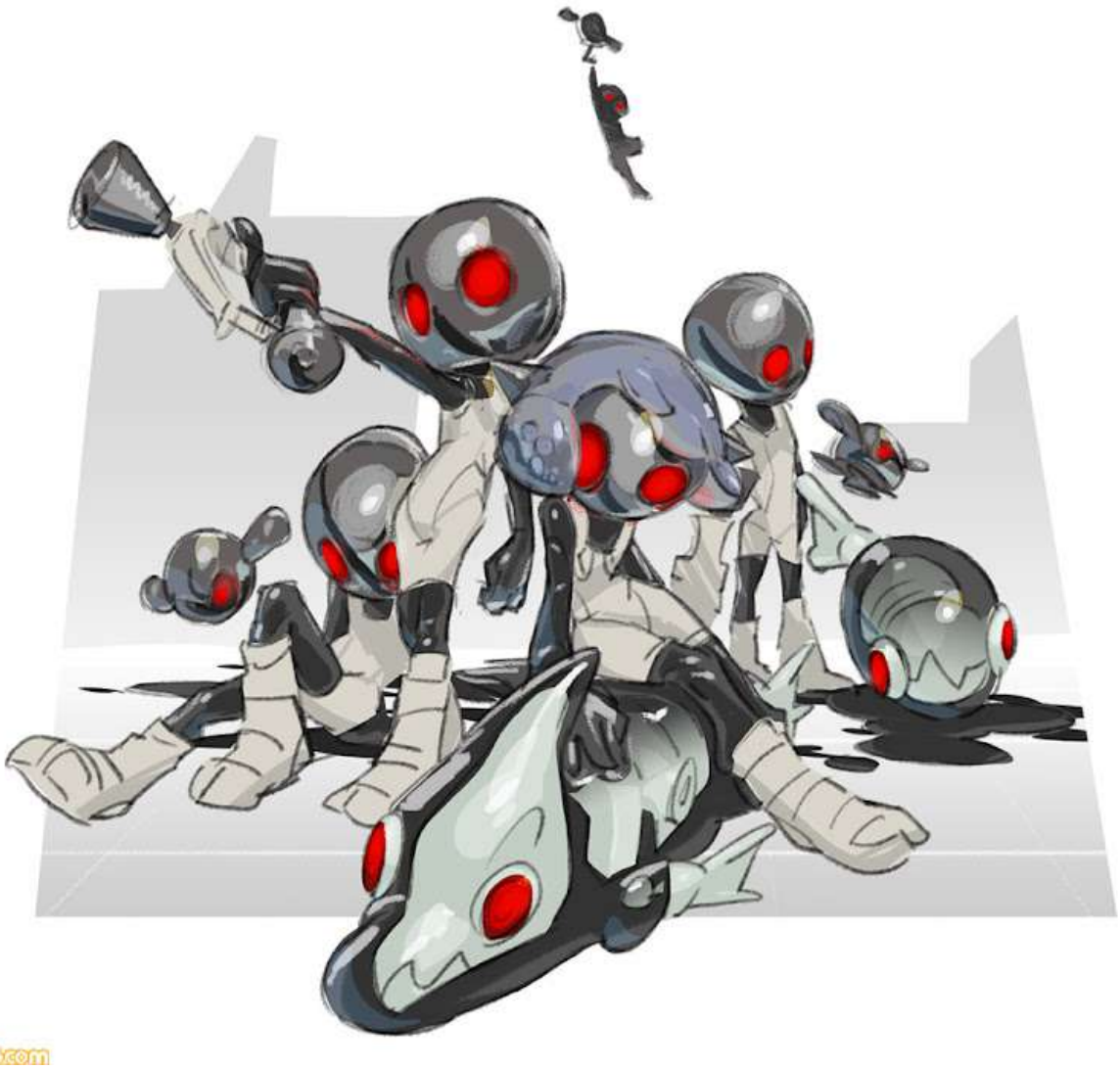


[[TN: A comparison for the conveyor belt sushi references in the design.]]

— Is the Inkling-like appearance of the Parallel Canon a direct copy of the squid player character?

Inoue: The data of Agent 4 was copied by Order due to the rumors that they were the most powerful Inkling, and pasted that data into that entity. Upon closer inspection, they appear to be made out of sludge. The one wearing the mask is a copy of Agent 4, and the ones wearing helmets are copies of that copy. If you have Splatoon 2 save data, it will have the same appearance as the Agent 4 on that file.

[[TN: Please do not take this as Agent 4 being *objectively* the strongest Inkling ever or anything. Keyword: rumored. Also consider the limited scope of the Memverse, and that they were assigned head of Memverse security, so it would be in their data, that Order has access to, that they are someone powerful in this virtual world.]]

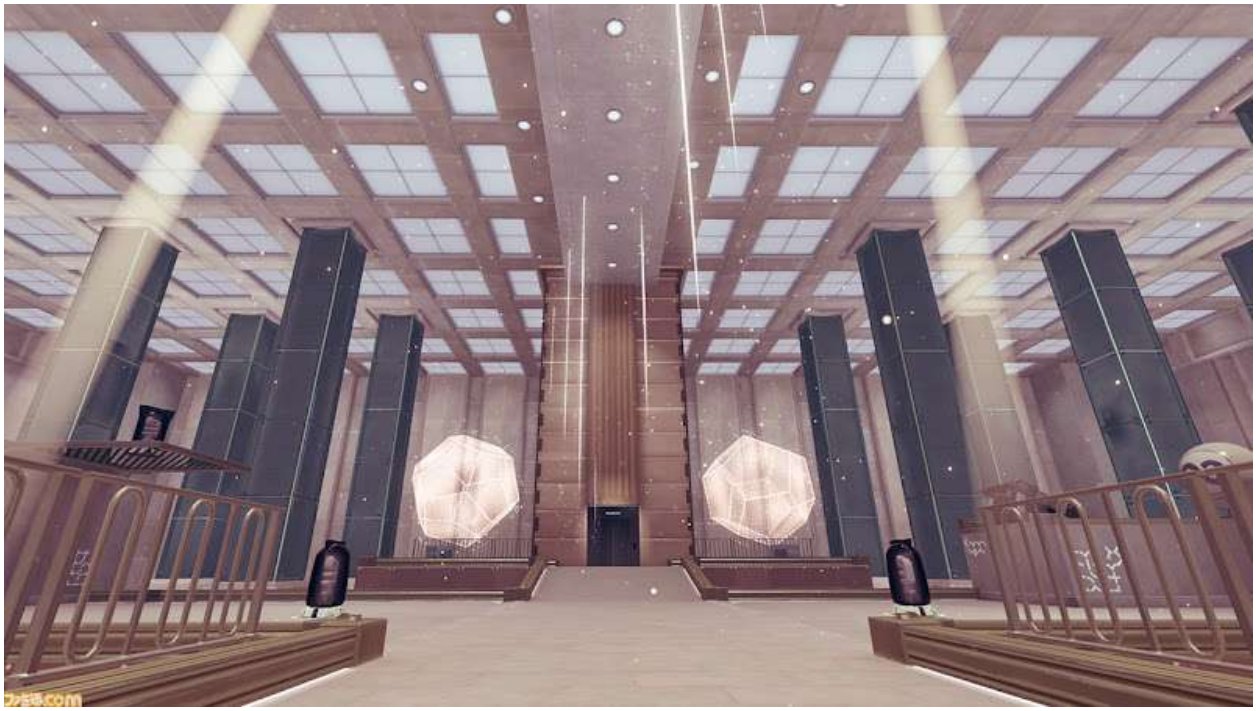


Part 3: A City of Order created from an aggregation of memories.

— We know the Memverse is a virtual world that Marina created by copying Inkopolis Square, but there are square objects, spiral-like bars, and snow-like shapes that appear in the sky or fall out of nowhere. What are they?

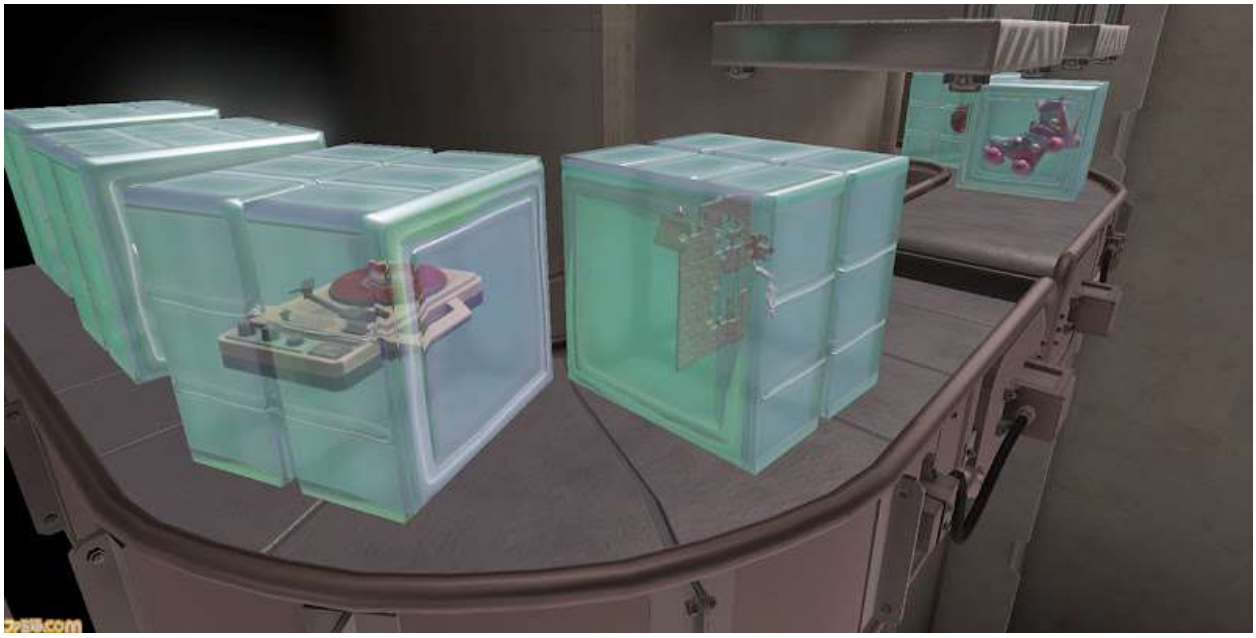
Inoue: Each element of the program that makes up the virtual world is represented as a plankton-like shape. The objects that appear in the City of Order and the foyer are those plankton reacting to sound and emitting light.

The staff members who had proposed and handled the project created art installations when they were students, making an authentic final product.



— There are various backgrounds for the stage, including factory-like spaces as well as areas used in the "Octo Expansion" testing facilities. But are the objects in the background, like the pancakes and picture book based on Marina's childhood memories?

Inoue: Yes. In the background of the floors, you can see cubes holding various memorabilia, which were extracted from the memories of Marina and other octarians. The Tower of Order serves as a factory where memory cubes are produced, grayscaled, and eventually incinerated. The snow-like substance that is falling onto the City of Order is incinerated ash from the tower. It looks beautiful, but in actuality, is quite scary.



— I thought it looked like snow, but it was really ash...! Were the enemies in the Memverse created by Marina?

Inoue: The enemies were originally created by Marina, and their behavior has not really changed since then. However, they were not as aggressive as they are now and looked different before Order took over the system.

— Did Overlorder and Smollusk originate from Marina's subconscious mind?

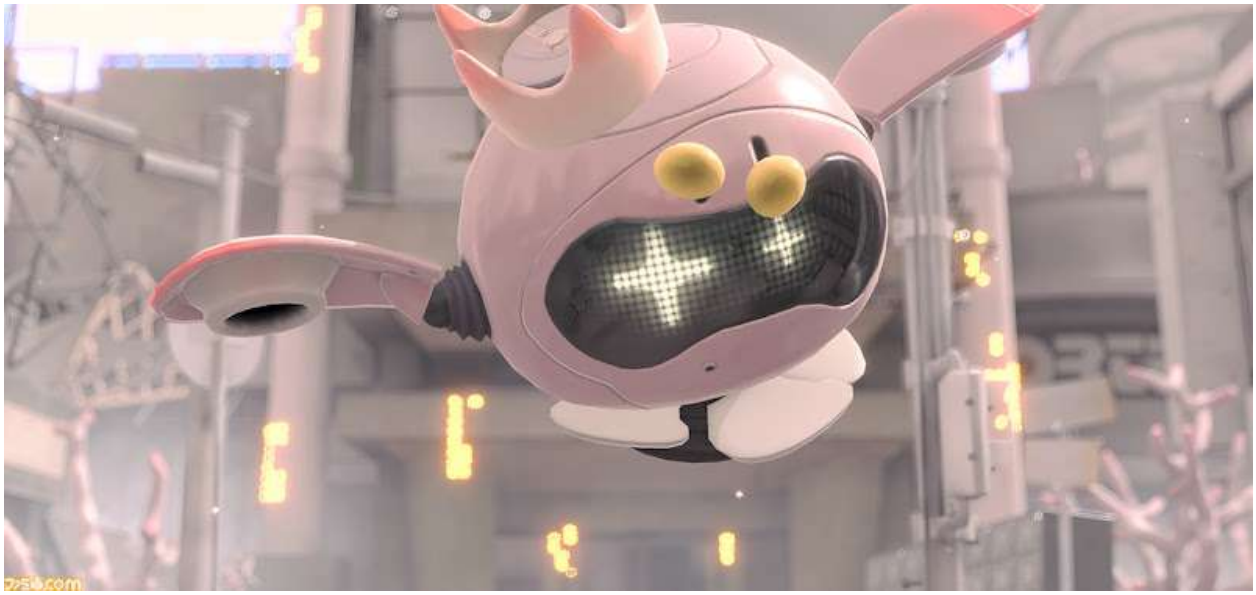
Matsumoto: The mem cakes taken into the Memverse, the thoughts of the Octoling engineers involved in its development, and Marina’s subconscious as a catalyst, led to the creation of Order. Although it is a newly born entity, it is unbalanced, stuffed with the belief that it must create a world of order, and a vast amount of borrowed knowledge. Eventually, Order applied the method it used to generate Jelletons to form a body and became Overlorder, but the battle at the top floor of the Spire of Order blew away most of the goals and knowledge that were imposed on it, and it became Smollusk.

— Why did you choose to have Pearl appear as a drone?

Matsumoto: We wanted something to support the player in various aspects of the game, and we wanted the player to be able to glide, so we made it so that the player would be accompanied by something like a drone. We already knew that Pearl would appear in the story, so making her a drone worked well. In the end, the Pearl Drone took care of most of the crazy functions that the player wouldn't be able to do on their own.

— I assume that Pearl is able to become a drone and back at will after Marina reverts her back into her original form, but what is Pearl's own reason for choosing to be a drone?

Inoue: She likes high places and being able to fly around freely.

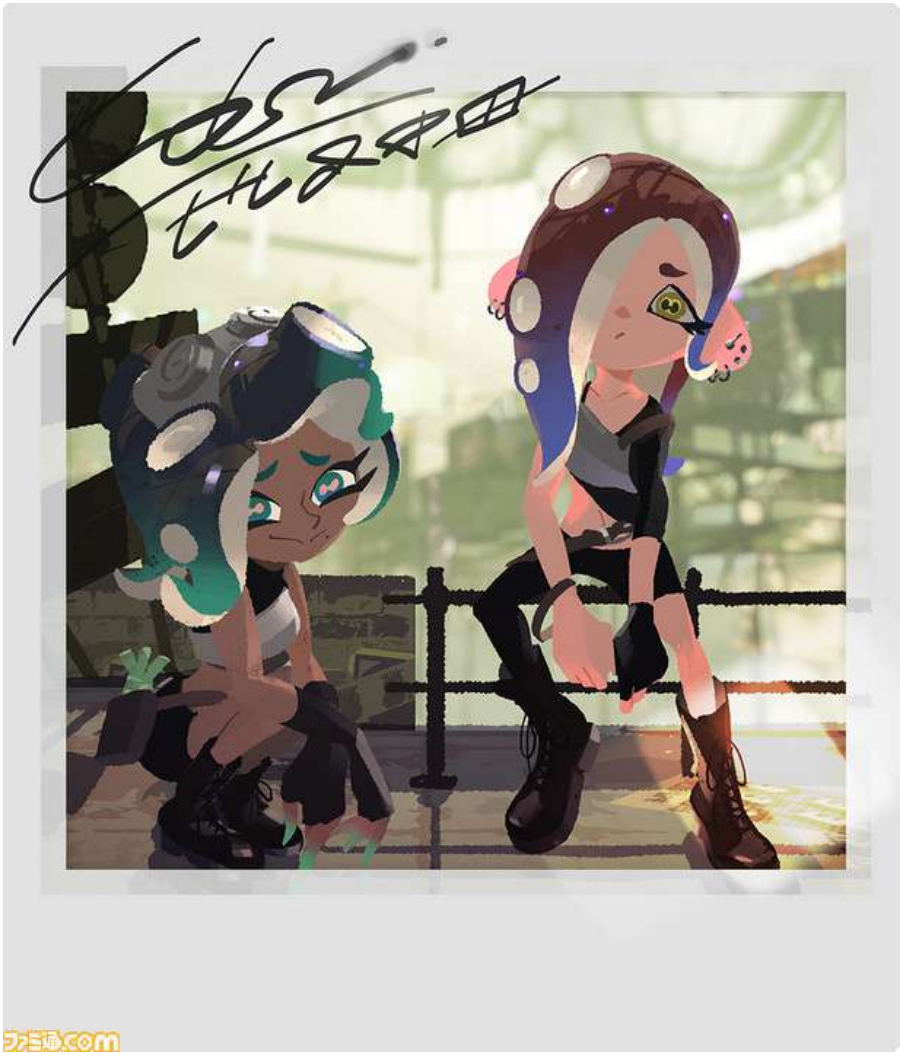


— That's a very Pearl-like reason (laughs). I was surprised by the new songs by Dedf1sh and Off the Hook. What was the reason why you chose Acht to be one of the guides for this story?

Inoue: As a guide to the virtual world, we thought about using something like C.Q. Cumber from *Octo Expansion* or an artificial intelligence like the one in Alterna, but I thought doing something like that would be a bit bland, so we decided to use Acht.

I wanted to design a character who looked intimidating, but actually had an adorable face. (Mr. Inoue)

I also like the fact that they're both Octolings, and how they look different from Pearl when paired up with Marina. (Mr. Inoue)



The pairing of Marina, an honor student who escaped to the surface, and Acht, a delinquent who went underground, both to pursue music, is also a contrast. It's very emotional. (Mr. Inoue)

— What are the organisms who live in the City of Order?

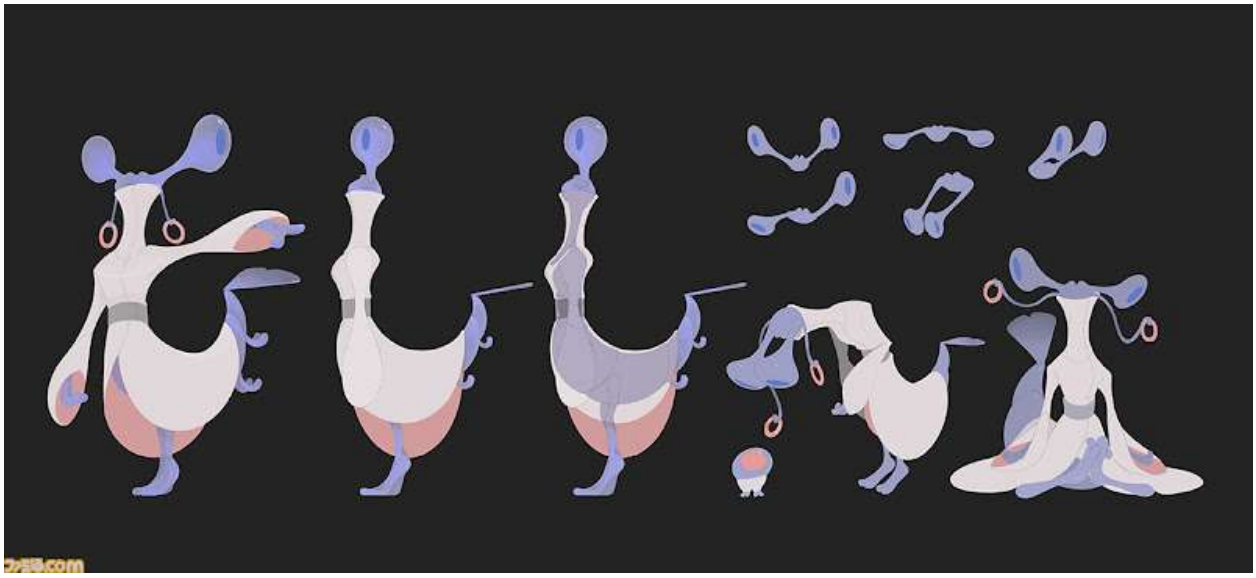
Inoue: They are the nodes of the program that make up the virtual world and are represented as living creatures (plankton).

— There are many strange-looking individuals, such as jellyfish wrapped in a pair of trunks. What can you tell us about their designs?

Inoue: Unlike the Inklings who actively chose to wear clothes with style, the inhabitants of this world of order are "made" to wear clothes. For this reason, The design was intended to give the illusion of being dressed in clothes, so they wear trunks wrapped around their bodies, or are just wrapped in cloth.

— Cipher's way of speaking is quite memorable. What can you tell us about the character?

Inoue: Cipher is the only program node plankton who has noticed that they all exist in a virtual world. When the consciousness of living things were pulled into the Memverse, various consciousnesses were mixed up and happened to flow into Cipher. Because the thoughts of creatures from different regions were mixed, it speaks in an inconsistent and accented manner. It’s knowledgeable, but it is like a baby born alongside the Memverse, so it is curious about everything.



—Is the school where Marina and Acht were trained only for Octoling soldiers, or are the other Octarians training in a different part of the school?

Inoue: The training school where Marina and Acht were taught is a school that specializes in training elite Octoling soldiers. Each type of Octarian learns at its own training school, and the Octotroopers who do not metamorphose into a human form attend a different school. The school they go to depends on ability and aptitude, not the individual's own wishes.

Pictured here is a view of the dormitory at the training school.

— What happened to Acht after *Side Order* and what are they doing now? Can we see them anywhere?

Inoue: After regaining consciousness in the Deepsea Metro, they escaped to the surface on their own. After that, with the help of Off the Hook and Agent 8, they've been enjoying DJing and creating music on the surface, mainly in the Inkopolis area. In addition, they've been able to secure their living expenses for the time being by collecting the unpaid royalties for the songs they created under the name Dedf1sh.

They're more of an indoorsy person, so they don't go out in public much, but it seems that they were somehow registered to play Tableturf Battle. If you'd like to play a match against them, they'd be happy to oblige.

— There are many changes to Inkopolis Square, such as the construction being completed and a new café opening in the plaza. Are there any specific details you'd like to point out to players?

Inoue: It's only been four years since the Final Splatfest, so not much has changed, but the skateboarding area has become popular and is being renovated, and the area previously under construction has been completed, with a recreation area and train station entrance. The city is frequented mainly by young people, but it has also become a bit more relaxed.

During Splatoon 2, Pearl ate snacks during live broadcasts, but in this work, she has gotten so used to being on air that she's started eating hamburgers and fries with impunity. It might be better if there was someone to remind her when she's being recorded.

— Iso Padre is on the surface now as well. What kind of life is he living in Inkopolis Square?

Inoue: He was drawn to Inkopolis Square due to the addition of a claw machine full of the dolls that he loves. Even though he is on the surface, he still lives modestly and probably stays in that café from opening to closing. Although the café is relatively empty, he might get in trouble for that.

--What was the state of the residents of Inkopolis Square during the period of time until the problem was resolved?

Inoue: I think the residents who are the type that work hard were troubled because of the persistent, vaguely absentminded feeling that came over them. But there's many residents who live lenient lives anyway, so it seemed to be functioning as a town in a sense.

— On a side note, is the rug beneath the vending machine in the Tower of Order supposed to hint at the presence of a familiar sea urchin...or am I overthinking things?

Matsumoto: The Spire of Order is the accumulation of memories from various people. I believe that the vending machine corner is the result of a combination of thoughts about a space for shopping inside the tower and the image of a back alley.

Part 4: Memory is an essential key word in terms of sound design as well.

— What is the overall concept or theme for the game's sound?

Sudo: The landscape of Memverse is a projection of the memories of those that were sanitized, and in the concept stage, the lower floors were inspired by the inorganic but peaceful facilities where Marina and her friends spent their early childhoods.

The main theme is a mixture of tenderness, sadness, and the voices of people close to us, which evokes those warm and nostalgic memories that we have lost.

The concept was that the songs in the lower floors as a whole were those that evoked the feeling of "someone's nostalgic memories." But as one moves towards the upper floors, The arrangement has a kind of distortion to it, as if it had been shredded and roughly subjected to "too much order."

Incidentally, the music is played by memory fish swimming around the stage, they're called "Free Association."

— When you collect the discs, the intro to Inkopolis News is played. What's the idea behind that?

Sudo: The sound played when the discs are collected comes from the Pearl Drone's speakers. I think that the intro of "Inkopolis News," which she'd been doing together with Pearl for a long time, reflects Marina's wish to stay together with Pearl as always.

— For Marina's nostalgic feelings to help out and stop the enemy's movements is so touching ... Now please tell us about each of the songs with vocals. Is the song for the Marina Agitando fight a solo song?

Sudo: It's called "Monologue" [["Unconscience" in English]], and in the name that is correct, it is Marina's first solo song. However, I don't think the rescued Marina remembers writing or singing this song. She might blush when Pearl tells her about it later.

— I hope she'll sing it live someday. The song for the Smollusk battle gave me a Chinese sort-of impression.

Sudo: Is it the rematch song "Short Order"? I did not intend to make it particularly ethnic, but the scale of the melody may indeed have such a mood.

[[TN: The song "Short Order" is in a C major pentatonic scale. Pentatonic scales are common in east asian music, and the initial melody goes in a descending direction, which is something that shows up in traditional Chinese music. These may be reasons why the song comes off as "Chinese". (Thank you to Plink for this information!)]]

I wanted to bring Pearl’s cuteness to the forefront in this song to balance out Marina’s toughness in "Unconscience," and to create a light-hearted, no-nonsense song that gives off a different feel from the first time fighting Smollusk.

— I believe the last battle song is an arrangement of "Ebb&Flow," is this a version with Acht in it?

Sudo: The melody of the song that plays an important role in the final battle, "Spectrum Obligato", is synchronous with the vocals in the chorus of “Ebb & Flow.”

Acht (Dedf1sh) certainly participates, they’re playing the pad and keyboards, as well as dueting some record scratches with Marina in a low-key manner. Out of respect for Off the Hook, they do not speak.

— Finally, please share a message to all the fans of Splatoon out there.

Inoue: *Side Order* is a DLC that is an extension of the main game, but also a challenge to explore new things. I am relieved that we were able to successfully deliver it, despite our many new challenges. If you feel that this kind of "orderly" world is good every once in a while, that would make me very happy.